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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Bureau of Animal Industry
Animal Husbandry Division

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DEVELOPING A SMALL-TYPE TURKEY AT THE
BELTSVILLE RESEARCH CENTER, BELTSVILLE, MD.

During the last decade there has been a simultaneous increase in the number of turkeys raised and in the average size of turkeys produced. However, there has not been a corresponding increase in the demand for the heavier birds and this has resulted in a price differential of from 1 to 6 cents per pound in favor of smaller market turkeys. This demand on the part of consumers seems to be based on sound considerations and is likely to be permanent. In view of this trend, the U. S. Department of Agriculture initiated in 1934, at the Beltsville Research Center, Beltsville, Md., an experimental project on the development of a small-type turkey. Since that time marked progress has been made but it will take several more years to develop and fix definitely the desired characteristics in this small-type turkey.

Several of the standard varieties, the wild turkey, and White Austrian turkeys imported from Scotland have been crossed in the development of this small-type turkey. From the crossbred progeny selections are being made.

The characteristics desired are as follows:

Weight at market age (24-26 weeks):

	<u>Live weight</u>	<u>Dressed weight(undrawn)</u>
Young toms	12 to 17 pounds	10-1/2 to 15 pounds
Young hens	7-1/2 to 10 pounds	6-1/2 to 9 pounds

Conformation:

Compact body with moderately short legs, moderately long keel bone, and an abundance of meat, especially on the breast and legs.

Early maturity:

In finished (U. S. Prime) condition with respect to fat, fleshing, and feathering at the age of 24 weeks.

Performance:

Reasonably high egg production - 50 percent from beginning of laying to June 1. High fertility - 90 percent or greater. High hatchability - 80 percent or more of fertile eggs. High viability - 85 percent or more of all poults started.

Color:

White

Hatching eggs, poults, or breeding stock are not available for distribution by the Department.

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